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MATWATCH

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STEVE'S SIDELIGHTS

By Steve Beverly
MATWATCH Editor

Have you ever picked up documentation for a personal computer and found yourself in a daze of uncertainty? Or have you ever had a boss tell you to do one thing and 15 minutes later, reverse himself?

Or have you watched World Class or AWA wrestling lately and not come away thoroughly befuddled, if not irritated?

Let me first reiterate I feel the accomplishment Jerry Lawler has made in restoring some sense of dignity to the AWA belt is a miracle in itself. And Lawler has defended that title in at least six different promotions, which doesn't exactly dilute his accusation that Ric Flair and Randy Savage are "company champions," though the depth of their titles still commands more respect.

But the recent title vs. title showdowns between Lawler and World Class champ Kerry Von Erich have become a sad cliche. The weekend of Oct. 7-9 in my area, three different Lawler defenses (two vs. Kerry) aired on different shows---all screw job endings and all which could have left a casual fan with the impression Jerry dropped the belt all three times.

On SCW, Tommy Rich used a foreign object on Lawler for a pinfall. Only the last-minute reversal by Southern figurehead president Gordon Clements returned the title to Lawler, though it was so rushed at the end of the show, there was no clear definition that Lawler was still AWA champ.

Four hours later on ESPN, Kerry used a piledriver on Lawler to presumably win both belts but that decision was reversed because we learn the piledriver is illegal in the CWA (funny, since that's been a favorite Lawler maneuver) so Kerry took a DQ. Then Lawler claims he's both champions because the World Class belt is supposed to change hands on a DQ (and Jerry is right). The Keystone Cops are alive and well.

Next morning, after Jerry & Kerry both slug the referee in their battle at the Sportatorium, Frank Dusek holds up both titles. Yet, the next Friday, Lawler is again AWA champ on ESPN as if the Texas match never happened.

What we have is a scenario which may have worked before cable TV and national syndication. You could tailor cliffhanger endings strictly for your area and they would succeed because the show from your territory was likely the only one your viewers saw that week.

But in today's market, not even wrestling fanzines can explain this in a fashion that anything but the most naive mark would buy. In the end, the viewer is hopelessly confused over who's champion where and on what night. In my view, this doesn't give the fan a soap opera hook, it turns him off.

The Cotton Bowl card Oct. 15 in which Dusek fast-counted Kerry supposedly to both titles (he left the ring with each belt) only clouds the issue because you can bet Lawler is still recognized as AWA king on Gagne's shows.

The idea of a Texas vs. Tennessee feud isn't bad for people in those states. But the AWA, CWA & World Class are in a major syndication consortium for national ad dollars and to viewers outside those regions, a two-state feud has to be a snoozer. Again, this may have been more successful when we didn't multiple shows in a single market or pre-cable.

Finally, so many Jerry-Kerry matches have ended in ripoff finishes that I feel the credibility of an eventual unificaqtion at SUPER CLASH III Dec. 13 is shot. Who's going to buy into this when in every prior match where the rules have ensured "there must be a winner of both titles," those provisions are conveniently forgotten.

Well, I guess there's one thing they haven't used that could be tried in Chicago. Does the Illinois State Athletic Commission stop matches for blood?

TITLE, TITLE: WHO'S GOT THE TITLE? or JERRY & KERRY MAKE THE FANS VERY WARY

COMINGS & GOINGS

NWA/TURNER UPDATE

MATWATCH has learned lawyers representing Ted Turner are satisfied with efforts of Jim Crockett to settle debts and one source told us the oficial signing transferring majority control of the NWA to Turner Broadcasting should happen this week. But one of Crockett's key creditors told us last Friday he's been told nothing about a settlement and sources in Dallas will neither confirm nor deny the reports.

Turner has had de facto control of JCP since Oct. 1 but the company cannot proceed with major changes until it has controlling interest. One creditor told MATWATCH if a transfer occurs before his account is settled, TBS will be added as a defendant to his pending lawsuit.

A key insider in Atlanta has told us the following:

---Dusty Rhodes will likely get a substantial amount of cash from JCP even though he owns no company stock, in order to silence any problems if Rhodes is bounced from a TBS NWA.

---Jim Ross will emerge in what has been termed a "very influential role" in the new NWA. The Turner people are said to be high on Ross, who was a major front office force in the old UWF.

---Aggressive efforts at new talent acquisiitions will pick up rapidly.

Paul E. Dangerously was scheduled to meet in Dallas last Friday to sign with the NWA and bring in Dennis Condrey & Randy Rose for a Midnight Express vs. Midnight Express feud. But that signing has not been confirmed. (LATE NOTE: They did sign to start Nov. 1 and will wrestle Eaton & Lane at STARRCADE. But the talks with Ricky Steamboat are dead.

---Jerry Jarrett did not show for two scheduled meetings last week to finalize his purchase of Ken Mantell's shares of World Class. Speculation is Jarrett is leery of jumping into a situation without majority control. A key insider tells us Fritz Von Erich has washed his hands of the group.

---Terry Gordy has left World Class and plans to make his home in Birmingham (he may work spot shows for CWF between Japan dates). Michael Hayes is not gone but several sources believe he won't stay beyond SUPER CLASH III.

---Percy Pringle quit his World Class p.r. job last week and one report has Frank Dusek being fired from the front office but retained as figurehead promoter on an individual show basis. Sounds like big turmoil in that group.

---With Lord Humongous departing CWF for Memphis as Sid Vicious, he'll drop a loser-leave-town match to Kokina. One story has his slot to be filled by a new heel. Masa Chono has worked some shows recently but only seemed to be moderately received on TV last week.

---While I'm thinking of it, why doesn't SOMEBODY pick up Brian Pillman? He'd be a great newcomer for the NWA (or even the CWF where he was headed).

---Though Terry Taylor will be humiliated with this Red Rooster gimmick in the WWF, word is he'll shortly be turned babyface after a beef with Bobby Heenan.

---Hardcore WWF fans will probably enjoy SURVIVOR SERIES II but the lineup doesn't look overwhelming. Of course, Vince could surprise us all and turn Hogan heel there (it might be time for it, at that).

---Key CWF oficials summited Sunday to discuss adjustments in the group. Houses are severely down and the roster simply has no heel strong enough to get over big. Jerry Stubbs & Tony Anthony are on the verge of overkill jumping all the key faces.

---Some FNN/SCORE news: Nov. 12 at 5 p.m. EST, a retrospective on Bruiser Brody. Joe Pedicino & John Henderson host. The show was taped last weekend in Atlanta.

---In November, CWF will be off SCORE altogether as the only wrestling will be Memphis on Saturday at 5.

---Both the CWF and Memphis return to SCORE in December in as yet unspecified time slots.

---Jesse Ventura guests (or already has) on FNN's THE FAN SPEAKS OUT Wednesday (Oct. 26) at 8 p.m. EDT. He's there to discuss steroids but it's open season on the phone lines.

---Atlanta, St. Louis and Dallas (home of some of the key champions on the SUPER CLASH card) have not yet cleared the Dec. 13 PPV on cable. The show, however, will be available to dish owners.

---My Northwest friend Glenn Fox had a disappointment last Saturday when he headed to Portland and Tatsumi Fujinami wasn't on the card. Fujinami's victory over Top Gun Dave Sierra for the Pacific Northwest title had the hardcore fans buzzing.

---And finally, rumors are floating that Titan Sports wants to buy a TV station (19 network affiliates are on the market) but no one will confirm.

RATINGS RAP

Weekend Ending Sept. 25

	Rating	Stations	Pct. /U. S.
WWF	9. 1	253	96%
NWA	5. 2	150	90%

(ANALYSIS: Virtually unchanged from last week. ALL-PRO figures not available from Nielsen.)

PINFALL PROFILE: LEARNING THE ROPES

Take GROWING PAINS, cancel the mother, add a pinch of ONE DAY AT A TIME, scripts that sound like the Sherwood Schwartz library and throw in a wrestler or two a week who isn't certain how he fits into the storyline and you have LEARNING THE ROPES, the newest hybrid between the ring and sitcoms.

In viewing the first three shows, I don't want to come across as a complete antagonist. I have seen some positive family values presented and Lyle Alzado appears to have a degree of acting range if given the right material.

But the kids---well, they're typical sitcom kids. The teen male, Yannick Bisson, is cut out of the Kirk Cameron/Jason Bateman mold which sends posters up on

adolescent girls' walls. Unfortunately, this show is solely geared to adolescents.

My biggest problem with LEARNING THE ROPES is that, to the casual viewer, it's confusing why Robert Randall (Alzado) moonlights as The Masked Maniac. In episode 3, some progress was made as Robert struggles with himself after "injuring" Jimmy Garvin.

But a major flaw in the second show (other than Ricky Morton acting on a par with Jerry Mathers as an adult) had Morton woven into the story by befriending young Mark (Bisson) and jamming with him at a local rock club. Problem: if you don't follow wrestling, you'd have a hard time deriving if Ricky is a musician or a pro wrestler and why he does both. At least he didn't sing "Boogie Woogie Dance Hall."

Other than the embarrassment it must be causing Jim Crockett (who owns 20% of the show) that in the first three weeks, Morton and Tully Blanchard (both gone from the NWA) were featured, LTR has a low-budget look which suggests the producers have an unconventional idea but aren't certain how to make the hybrid concept work.

LTR is harmless bubblegum viewing but it's probably the only show on TV where Trent Knight will get equal billing with Ric Flair as "special guest star."

I REMEMBER: Les Welch vs. Sputnik Monroe

When Rick Steiner's Florida title was created in 1966, 15 men vied for the belt in a tournament which ended in Jacksonville. Lester Welch of the Fuller/Welch ring dynasty, had been a big name in Florida for years but always fell just short of the major titles. On the other hand, that master showman, Sputnik Monroe, had antagonized Sunshine State fans for months with his profile, blond streak and lovable arrogance at the mike.

Welch beat Monroe in the Gateway City in the finals in a bout which foreshadowed the first Ali-Frazier fight, after which Joe Frazier spent a week in the hospital recovering from his win. Welch was stitched 15 times following his championship.

But the more dramatic memory for me was the rematch. The best-of-3 fall battle had been plugged for weeks on CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING FROM FLORIDA.

Oddly, it may have been the best wrestling Monroe ever did. As a total surprise, the Blond Streak went for a leg dive off the top and an ensuing series of leg maneuvers which kept Welch on the mat better than 10 minutes. That's where he should have kept him because when Welch finally arose, Sputnik tried to match him crisscrossing the ropes and fell prey to a Thesz press for the first fall.

But the second fall remains as eight of the bloodiest minutes I've ever witnessed. Down a fall, Sputnik deduced he couldn't win with wrestling, so he went for Welch's still-scarred face. Within four minutes, he had opened a cut so wide it made Les's face a crimson mask before Gordon ever coined the phrase.

Monroe's barraged made Welch look like a character from NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD. But no Maryland State Athletic Commission here. Sputnik was disqualified for refusing to stop the onslaught and Welch retained his belt.

Seven years later, I saw these two joking in a Savannah dressing room as co-promoters. I think it was then I realized wrestling scars don't need an Ernest Angley miracle to heal.

TV TEMPO (Weekend of Oct. 21-23)

(NWC) - Miguel Perez Jr. draw with Bobby Jaggers; Carlos Colon d. Hercules Ayala in fire match; Ayala d. Ricky Santana. DRAW.

(MEMPHIS) - Bill Dundee/Todd Morton d. Keith Eric & Hangman; RPMs d. Ken Raper/Alan Reynolds; Sid (Eudy) Vicious d. Tommy King; Jeff Jarrett/Brickhouse Brown DQ over Cactus Jack Foley/Gary Young; Jerry Lawler d. Terry Adonis when "spiritual adviser" Phil Hickerson hits advisee Adonis with shoe. ANGLE: Jimmy Golden threatens Jarrett if he doesn't return Robert Fuller's boot. Jarrett doesn't and is jumped by Stud Stable. SEGMENT: Downtown Bruno acts as servant for Bill & Jamie Dundee and is attacked by a dog. POWERSLAM-PLUS.

(SCW) - SOUTHERN TAG TITLE: Ranger Ross/Joey Maggs d. Dino Minelli/Steve Lawler to retain but Dino & Steve piledrive Ross and tar & feather Maggs afterward; Chic Donovan d. Sugar Ray Lloyd when Tommy Rich hits Lloyd with chain; Mr. Wrestling II d. Dutch Mantel in lumberjack match; The Bullet DQ over Iron Sheik. ANGLE: Ray Candy slams Grizzly Boone but is refused $5,000. POWERSLAM...a nice effort for SCW!

(CWF) - Tom Prichard d. The Invader; Johnny & Davey Rich d. The Count & Grappler II; Willie B. Hert d. Chuck Allen; Masa Chono d. The Equalizer. TAPE: highlights of Prichard's CWF title win and Ken Wayne cutting Danny Davis' hair. ANGLE: Bullet is attacked at top of show by Tony Anthony & Jerry Stubbs and injure his arm. At end of show, they jump him again and crowd pops for save by Brad Armstrong & Willie B. Hert. DRAW....too many masked jobbers on this show.

(PWTW) - SCW, Joe Pedicino interviews Tommy Rich and recaps Jerry Lawler-Rich feud; WCCW, Terry Gordy wins DQ over Iceman Parsons when Akbar's Army interferes; CWA, RPMs d. Scott Steiner/Ken Raper; CWF, Tom Prichard discusses CWF title win; WWF, Rougeaus win squash. DRAW-PLUS...this may have been better but WXTX in Columbus butchered the end of this show, Joe.

(W. CLASS) - Black Bart d. Vince Apollo; Steve Cox d. Dr. Who; Eric Embry d. Ken Castle; Embry loses DQ to Kendall Windham when Akbar's Army attacks; ELIMINATION TAG: Kendal Windham eliminated by Parsons after Akbar interferes, leaving Kerry Von Erich solo against Parsons & Botswana Beast. As Kerry is pummeled, Embry shows up as tag partner and rids the

ring of the Akbarians, giving win to Kerry. ANGLE: Kendo Nagasaki & Super Black Ninja attack Kevin Von Erich with Kendo stick. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(LTR) - Robert (Lyle Alzado) begins to have second thoughts about his moonlighting wrestling career when he "injures" Jimmy Garvin's knee. When he visits Garvin in the hospital, Jimmy says his career may be over and he has no other skill. When Robert says he wants to hang it up as The Masked Maniac, Garvin shows up and says surgery has him better and the injury has made him realize he needs to prepare for "life after the ring," so he's going back to school part-time to learn to be a vet. OK. OTHER MATCH: Tully Blanchard d. The Maniac. RESTHOLD-PLUS...it wasn't bad to tackle the issue that a lot of wrestlers are unprepared for other careers but it was too neatly solved.

(AWA) - Ronnie Garvin d. Scott Steiner; Kerry Von Erich d. Gary Young; Greg Gagne d. Mike Enos; Jimmy Valiant/Bill Dundee/Jeff Jarrett win DQ over Robert Fuller/Jimmy Golden/Tommy Rich when Stud Stable interfere and wild melee breaks out. FLASHBACK: Ronnie Garvin wins TV title from Gagne. Plus, Jerry Lawler & Von Erich sign for Super Clash III title bout. DRAW...for last match.

(NWA/SYND.) - [NWA PRO]: NWA 6-MAN TAG TITLE: Road Warriors & Sting (sub for Dusty Rhodes) lose DQ to Varsity Club/Kevin Sullivan to retain belts but Warriors attack Sting and then jump Lex Luger when he comes in to stop the carnage. Other matches: Midnight Express d. Mark Fleming/Mike Justice; Koloffs d. Bob Emery/Tony Suber; Ron Simmons d. Cruel Connection. LOUISVILLE SLUGGER: Jim Cornette w. Russian Assassins. POWERSLAM. [WORLD WIDE]: Recap of Warriors attack on Sting; Al Perez d. Tommy Angel; Other winners: Fantastics, Sheepherders, Mike Rotundo. STRAIGHT TALK: Magnum T.A. w. Lex Luger; plus, Steiner hilarious doing rabbit ears behind heads of Sullivan & Rotundo. DRAW.

(NWA/TBS) - [A.M.] - Eddie Gilbert d. George Terrell; Other winners: RAs, Sheepherders, Perez/Larry Zbyszko, Italian Stallion, Ron Simmons. RESTHOLD...for great Ross-Schiavone commentary. [P.M.]: NWA TV TITLE: Rotundo d. Eddie Sweat; Recap of Warriors/Sting blowup; Dusty Rhodes vows revenge; Ric Flair hints Warriors may become the 3rd & 4th Horsemen; Koloffs d. Menaces; Other winners: Simmons, Midnights, RAs, Dick Murdoch, Gilbert, Larry Z. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(WWF) - [SUPERSTARS]: Tully & Arn (The Brainbusters) debut with win over Tommy Angel/Bob Emery; Other winners: Powers of Pain, King Haku, Tito Santana, Jake Roberts, Akeem Gang. ANGLE: During Bro. Love seg, Bubba Bossman attacks Hulk Hogan with nightstick. Slick sprays Hulk with mist and Hogan is handcuffed to rail and beaten. But Hulk recovers to knee Bubba and chase both villains. RESTHOLD-PLUS. [CHALLENGE]: Owen Hart Blazer d. Tommy Angel; Sam Houston d. George South; Other winners: Bad News Brown, Honky Tonk Man, Ron Bass, Koko B. Ware, Rougeaus. Gene Okerlund w. Demolition. BOMB-PLUS.

LINES OF THE WEEK - 1. Jim Ross, TBS, on RAs' ring music: "The Kremlin's Greatest Hits---you can get them by calling 1-800..." 2. Ross: "I figure if Paul Jones ever quits wrestling, he can be a tour guide at the Ponderosa." 3. Arn Anderson, WWF: "What we are is the cement of an already profound dynasty." 4. Jesse Ventura, WWF: "What do these people know in Fort Wayne? Dan Quayle's their senator." 5. Ross: "An offensive tournament ought to be tailor made for you (Sheepherders) because you're as offensive as any team I know." 6. Jim Cornette, TBS: "He (Abdullah) is so big, his bathtub at home has stretch marks." 7. Cornette: "The Road Warriors look like the Board of Directors for a massage parlor." 8. Dutch Mantel, CWF: "The only way I could get a divorce is if my wife found a lawyer in the mall." 9. Alan Martin & Mantel, CWF: MARTIN - "I've got a killer here." MANTEL - "He's also got some killer breath." 10. Lyle Alzado & Jimmy Garvin, LTR: ALZADO - "What are you good at besides being Gorgeous?" GARVIN: "I wanted to be a vet. But I figured why be a vet---I'm already working with animals." 11. Robert Gibson, AWA: "We haven't split up. There ain't no rock without a roll." 12. Cornette: "What's fresh on Paul Jones' mind would be good fertilizer." 13. Ross: "I'm not sure anyone's submitted his (Zbyszko's) name for the National Jaycees Top 10 Young Americans." 14. Cornette, NWA PRO: "When they stripped Ben Johnson of his gold medal, he said 'Hey, man! I didn't take no stereos.!'"

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Lee Marshall, AWA: "He (Tommy Rich) looks like the advertisement for the hot dog that plumps up." 2. Mantel, CWF: "Brad Armstrong had a flight cancellation in Miami. It was probably Eastern Airlines. They'll cancel a flight for anything."

BEST PICTURES - 1. SCW, for shot of Sir Samuel Kent reading a paper during the Southern tag title match; 2. SCW, for dramatic closeup of Mantel going face first into turnbuckle; 3. WORLD WIDE, shots of Steiner putting fingered rabbit ears behind Sullivan & Rotundo during interview; 4. TBS/A.M., shot of Ross marching in step with Sheepherders.

MISSED SHOT - NWA, for not clearly showing us that Steiner brought out the stretcher for Sting after his attack. If you taped it, freeze-frame it.

BEST ANALYSIS - Ross, NWA PRO, for pointing out midway through match that something was amiss because the Warriors had not tagged in Sting.

WORST MAKEUP - Bruce Prichard, WWF, for his distinctively red face.

DREADED GLITCH - SCW, for cutting on Joe Pedicino's mike while he's promising a fan to bring a wrestler over to see him later.

BOO AWARDS - 1. NWA, for dressing room interview with Road Warriors & Paul Ellering. Once again, the gist was that it was Dusty Rhodes' fault that Sting was attacked and Ellering's remarks appear only to get Dusty over again. 2. AWA, after 4 weeks of CWA area shows, isn't it time we had at least one week of Lance Russell at the mike? We've had David McLane, Jerry Lawler, Verne Gagne & Frank Dusek. How about Lance?

RATINGS: PINFALL! - Must See. PILEDRIVER - Excellent. POWERSLAM - Good. DRAW - Average. RESTHOLD - Fair. BOMB - Poor. PLUS - Midscale rating.

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PARTING BLOWS

I felt the Road Warriors' turn was fairly well done but the camera shots weren't close enough to give you the full impact. As you could tell, I was irritated at the focus of the Ellering interview but at least they didn't drag this thing out another week as I'd been told they might.... Jim Ross had one of his greatest days ever Saturday. His work during the Warriors' match was as close to his old UWF showclosing intensity as I've seen in the NWA and Tony Schiavone were both on a roll on the otherwise-dull TBS a.m. show.

...The Hogan/Bossman angle was fairly well done but I think it would have had more impact if Hulk had been left laying instead of making his comeback.... Did you notice how dead the reax was to Tully & Arn? Plus, they just seemed like guests in the wrong house.... The Road Warriors are expected to win the NWA tag belts Saturday night in New Orleans but that, as always, is subject to change.... Having Pedicino back on SCW is a big improvement. Now if the producers will finally change the intro and put Rick Stevart's name on as host and get rid of that awful "mustard on my blue jeans" theme music.

...The biggest thing Mantel needs to work at on the CWF shows is not stepping on Charlie Platt. It'll take time but he tends to overpower Charlie too often in the middle of a sentence.... Finally, my sincerest thanks to Dave Meltzer, Ron Lemieux & John Lanigan for their excellent reviews of the UAWF convention. You genuinely made me feel as though I were there. I certainly intend to be next year and I've already alerted Jon Gallagher so. Until next week, may God bless!

BULLETIN * BULLETIN * BULLETIN

ATLANTA - Turner Broadcasting System has officially signed purchase papers to take over controlling interest in Jim Crockett Promotions and the National Wrestling Alliance.

The deal was finalized Friday in Atlanta. Sources say TBS will take control of JCP Nov. 1 or 2.

TBS executive Jack Petrik will be chief executive officer for the new NWA. Crockett will be retained as general manager but with limited duties. An operations manager who will be listed under Crockett on the organizational chart will actually handle daily affairs.

Early word is that Dusty Rhodes will remain booker until at least Jan. 1. Supporters of Rhodes are pushing for him to be retained but other sources tell MATWATCH that position is far from settled.

The takeover ends six months of serious negotiations and ends 53 years of sole ownership of Jim Crockett Promotions by the formerly Charlotte-based Crockett family.

M A T W A T C H: T H E A N N U A L B E Y O N D

What a silly title for a pro wrestling yearbook but what a good bargain: only $4.50 for a comprehensive review of this most interesting year of 1988 in our favorite genre of entertainment.

If the world doesn't come to an end, we should have your copy available either Christmas or New Year's week. And if you give a gift copy to a friend, you'll receive three (3) free issues of MATWATCH as a bonus, as will your friend.

I need the orders by Dec. 10 in order to have a count for my printers. In two weeks, we'll have the ballots for the MATWATCH TV AWARDS for 1988 and the subscriber who comes the closest to the correct outcomes with his or her vote will receive four free issues of MATWATCH. I'm in the Christmas spirit early so you may as well participate.

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